live!

Elton John

THE SUNDOWN, Edmonton, was packed for the first of two night's performances by Elton John, and packed not largely by his older fans, but by a new influx of young girls.

They crammed down to the front of the stage, sang along with every number they could, waved arms, and screamed — yes screamed — as Elton jumped in the air, knelt down to play keyboard or took off his shimmering green lurex jacket.

Nigel Olsson is wearing headphones through the set, and from the opening number, Teacher I Need You, the sound is near perfect. Your Song kept the tempo low until Rocket Man had the audience swaying rhythmically, and then clapping along. Upstairs a girl is waving a toy crocodile, but it's Elton's Daniel single which comes next — and is introduced as the song he loves.

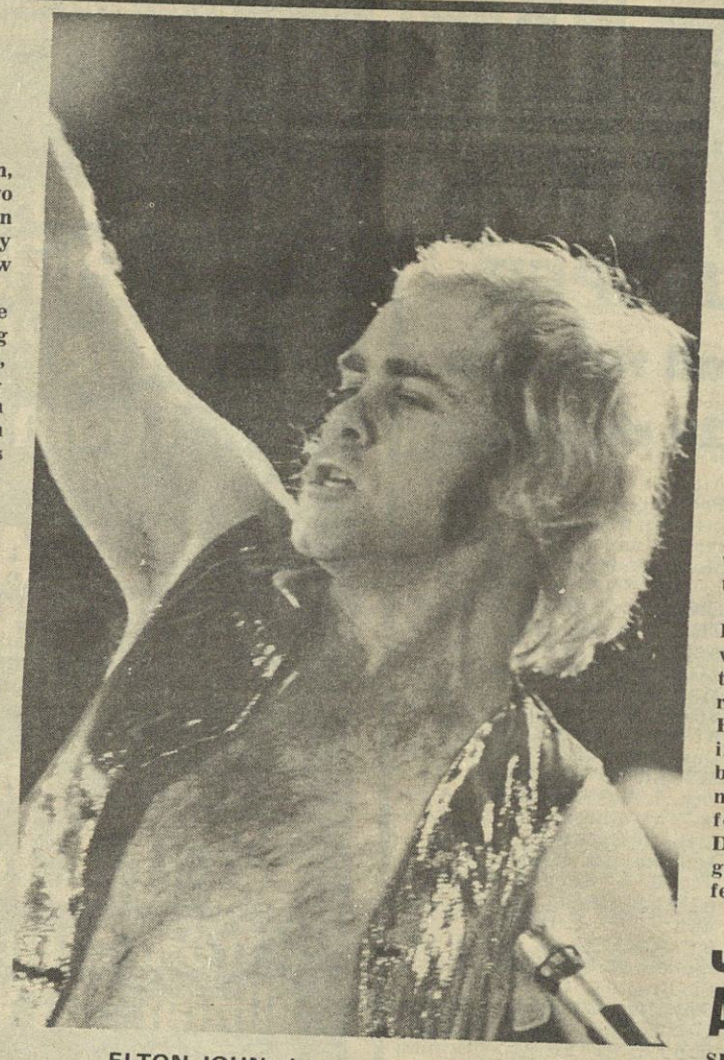
Then with a reference to Long Haired Lover From Liverpool Elton's into his own "silly" piece, Honky Cat — but this number stands up as good rock 'n' roll, and provides a strong contrast to the preceding Have Mercy On The Criminal.

After the first fan faints and is carried across stage, Elton slows the pace. During the two hour set it seemed that the tempo was at times kept too slow for long periods, particularly as the majority of the crowd were standing and seemed keen to vocalise and jump about along with Elton.

After a fast moving finish with Elderberry Wine — another from Don't Shoot Me etc. — with Elton kicking up his legs, getting down on his knees to play piano, and the band stirring up a storm it was little wonder that the audience still called for more.

At least six girls had fainted, and when Elton threw his hankie into the crowd they fought over it for some minutes.

Then after another encore it was all over . . . and people were left to ponder the somewhat strange phenomenon of a top class musician who's now attracting a lot of young girls, who sing along to the numbers, but want to scream too! V. M.



ELTON JOHN: the young girls came.

Sweet

THEIR FIRST major London concert appearance turned out to be something of a disaster for Sweet. Their ardent fans were convinced, it seems, of their worth.

But for anyone else, not so captured by "love," the set the group presented was unlikely to develop a lasting allegiance for them.

It took a good half an hour to sort out equipment problems — which for a concert at the Rainbow is close on unforgivable. But apparently the PA system didn't arrive early enough oup at the venue for the to check it out properly.

So while the group's management suffered near-coronaries, the Sweet opened up with a couple of ear-blasting numbers, before suddenly disappearing from the stage.

Puzzled fans stand in silence, then impatience spreads, while roadies run around fiddling with the mikes. Then Sweet are back, cheers, girls stand on seats, scream, wave scarves . . . but then Brian throws up his arm and he's off again, while the rest of the group wind down, and leave.

Then screams and the Sweet are on, this time sounding better. Drummer Mick Tucker worked hard throughout the set, and deserves full marks for his contribution.

But Steve Priest, made up in his usual fashion seemed somewhat reticient . . . and could probably have helped lift the atmosphere with more of his camping fun.

Brian Connolly on the other hand knocked himself out, trying to knock out the audience, reaching out his black gloved hands to the girls pressed close to the stage . . . who responded with squeals. It was nice to hear that the group presented all of their hits, rather than trying to create a heavy image; and they also pre-viewed their forthcoming single Hell-Raiser, which came over well. So the fans were happy, but for £1 a head they got a generally raw deal.

The group were only on stage for a brief spell, and though the kids were ready to rip the place apart, after the dampening opening they really didn't get the compensation needed to let their bubbling steam escape. As a friend commented, accidents do happen. V. M.

SWEET: PA hassles at the Rainbow.

Roxy Music

ROXY'S Phil Manzanera.

ONE DAY the Rainbow's full of excitable teenyboppers, the next denim clad music fans . . . but when Roxy Music are in town the scene is quite startling.

It was a night of theatrics from start to finish, and even the audience were clad in thirties style clothes — girls with net veils across their faces, pencil-slim skirts, and silver strappy shoes. And the male fans rivalled them for a place in the limelight.

Some had make-up beautifully applied, their hair sculptured into DA's and streaked with colour. It was a combination of the great and the grotesque.

Roxy Music were introduced by a growling blond figure slinking on and off stage, then the group loped on stage to burst into a track from their new and second album, Do The Strand, while hot-panted girls above wriggled to the music.

And it is on a visual level that Roxy win out — their music is greatly assisted by Eno's use of synthesiser and tapes, and the clarinet playing on Bogus Man also provided some weird and wonderful moments.

Most of the repertoire was taken from the new album, including In Every Dream Home A Heartache, during which Amanda (see front cover of new album) posed over the stage — and Bryan Ferry picked up guitar; and there were Blue Lagoons and Beauty Queen.

For the closing number, Editions Of You, Bryan invited all the audience down to the front, and the atmosphere really warmed up. And then Roxy were gone . . . but inevitably they were called back for the high-spot of the night, a rip-roaring encore featuring Virginia Plain. Definitely a professional group, and original. A visual feast.

Joan Armatrading

SHOWBIZ lore has it that girl singers, like brown shoes, usually don't make it; not just on their musical talent alone, that is.

Joan Armatrading, who's at Ronnie Scott's for another week, will be one of the few who do, judging by her performance last Thursday and her album Whatever's For Us.

Joan started hesitantly, but though she was a little uneasy to be in front of a rather blase and largely middle-aged night-club audience, the sheer quality of her songs more than made up for her nervousness and by the end of the set she was positively radiant.

Joan's band seemed a bit on the rigid side and it was sometimes hard to hear what she was singing. Nevertheless, her fiery guitar and piano and her rich, expressive voice, sometimes reminiscent of Joni Mitchell with her clear falsetto, left the audience in no doubt that we were watching a truly original talent and there aren't many of those — do try and hear her soon. R. S.

ELO

THE Rainbow was far from full when ELO appeared, but the people who had turned up to see the Orchestra's concert seemed well pleased with what they offered.

Their sound was good and the individual musicians are all colourful and interesting, but it wasn't the best performance yet to come from Jeff Lynne's group. The 10538 Overture proved to be one of the best numbers, and they also featured I Might Be Dreaming and Paganini Blues, along with two up tempo jig compositions.

But really it was Thin Lizzy who shone the brightest. Each time they appear they seem to improve, and though the hall was something like only 25 per cent full when they played their set, they proved themselves to be a highly competent band. Look What The Wind Blew In opened the set, and the group built the atmosphere up to reach their Whisky In The Jar hit, and Down At The Farm. — A. G.

RM AWARDS AT WEMBLEY COUNTRY MUSIC FEST

THE presentation of the Billboard / Record Mirror country music awards for 1973 will be one of the highlights of the Fifth International Festival of Country Music to be staged at Wembley's Empire Pool over Easter weekend (April 21 & 22).

These awards, first introduced in 1971, are given to the artists who, in the opinion of the judges, have made valuable contributions to the growth of the music on this side of the Atlantic and points are assessed on a number of factors which include overall popularity, recordings and performances.

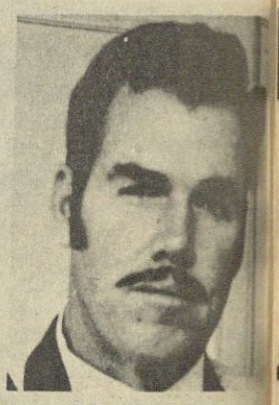
Nominations have now been selected by the judging panel but the names of the actual winners will not be revealed until the Saturday evening concert when an international celebrity will present the awards on stage.

Nominations for the various categories are as follows: Top U.S. Male Artist — George Hamilton IV, Slim Whitman, Johnny Paycheck and Faron Young; Top U.S. Female Artist — Skeeter Davis, Connie Smith and Dottie West; Top U.S. Group — Statler Brothers, the Stonemans and Tompall and the Glaser Brothers; Top Song of the Year — Help Me Make It Through The Night (by Kris Kristofferson), It's Four In The Morning (by Jerry Chesnut) and Take Me Home Country Roads (by John Denver).

In the section for British artists, the following have been nominated: Top U.K. Solo Performer — Bryan Chalker, Pete Sayers and Tex Withers; Top U.K. Group — Country Fever, the Hillsiders and Jonny Young Four; Most Promising U.K. Talent — Canadian Pacific, Frisco, Suzanne Harris and Brian Maxine.

In the Top U.K. Record Company section, Phonogram, Polydor, Pye and RCA have all been nominated as having made a worthy contribution to the marketing and promotion of country music product.

This year's panel of judges were: Country Music Association (Great Britain) chairman Jim Bailey; BBC Radio "Country Style" producer Colin Chandler; country music promoter Mervyn Conn, broadcaster and journalist Murray Kash; BBC Radio "Up Country" producer Dennis O'Keefe; BBC Radio London "London Country" presenter Bob Powel; Record Mirror country music editor Tony Byworth; Music Week news editor Philip Palmer; Billboard country music editor, Bill Williams, Billboard Nashville reporter John McCartney and Emily Bradshaw, executive director of NARAS.



Slim Whitman

Gilbert gets his chart honours

GILBERT O'SULLIVAN pictured above collecting two chart awards at the special luncheon held by Record Mirror's sister paper Music Week at the Royal Garden Hotel, London, last week. Presenting him with awards as top male singles artist and top singles composer of 1972 was Des O'Connor, a special guest at the luncheon.